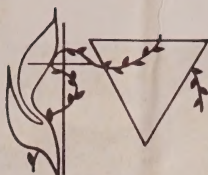


reconciling congregation program

A network of United Methodist local churches that
welcome all persons into the community of faith.



Open Hands

A quarterly magazine addressing
lesbian and gay concerns in a religious context

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— Quarterly resource magazine on lesbian/gay ministries.

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— A simple, friendly presentation of the facts on lesbians and gay men in the church. Written by Ann Thompson Cook, a sexuality educator and member of a Reconciling Congregation. Good starting point for discussion in local churches. A two-session leader's guide is available free.

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— A provocative, warm videotape portraying the painful stories of lesbians and gay men in the church and the struggles of Reconciling Congregations to be welcoming. 38 mins. A complete leader's guide is available free.

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— A five-session study for church groups on lesbian/gay concerns, leading to consideration of whether a congregation should become a Reconciling Congregation. Contains clear, easy instructions for study leader. Written by Patricia Ann Meyers and published by the Oregon-Idaho Conference, UMC.

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To MCC minister,

Please feel free to contact me at your convenience. I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and talk to you. I am the elected Southeastern Jurisdictional Representative to the National Affirmation Council. I just took office May 1st, 1994, and regret that my work schedule keeps me from being there at this year's Gay Pride Celebration in Birmingham. Please send me information about MCC Birmingham, such as scheduled times for Worship and other activities. I plan to visit your church in the near future, and look forward to working together, celebrating our diversity.

Love & Peace
in Christ,
Mark Wilson

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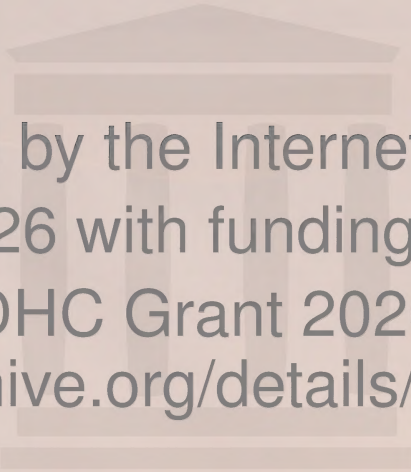
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Resources for Ministries Affirming the Diversity of Human Sexuality

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Is this your church?

Spring, 1994

Dear Friends:

This past year has been historic. The rights of gay men and lesbians have been debated in our national public forum for the very first time.

Amid the public debate over discrimination against lesbians and gays in employment, housing, parenting, and military service, one particularly disturbing tenor was evident. *The voices of the Religious Right have been virulent in their malicious attacks on lesbians and gay men..*

Are you disturbed that our Christian faith is portrayed on TV and radio and in newspapers as being harshly judgmental and hate-filled?

Do you want to demonstrate that our Christian faith can be compassionate and loving, but aren't sure how?

The concerns of lesbians and gay men have been debated in our churches for several years now. Some churches have struggled. Some churches have been polarized. Some churches have found a temporary truce. Many churches have just hoped and prayed that the "issue" would go away.

But the "issue" won't go away.



Millions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, and their families and friends, won't go away.

The dilemma in which our churches find themselves seems to be:

- we cannot, in good faith, continue to close the doors of our churches on millions of gay men and lesbians and their families and friends, but . . . on the other hand,
- to begin conversation about homosexuality in our churches risks an outpouring of emotion and pain and is potentially divisive.

You now have a special opportunity to help your church respond to this crisis of our faith.

Open Hands offers good news to Christians who are disturbed by hatred and homophobia.

Open Hands is the voice of churches that have found healing as they have grappled with the concerns of lesbian, gay and bisexual persons.



(over)



Open Hands embodies hope that our churches can be faithful to God's call to be in ministry with all persons.

Open Hands contains concrete ideas and resources for helping your church grapple with the concerns of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons.

Open Hands is a quarterly magazine which has been published since 1985 by the Reconciling Congregation Program, a national network of United Methodist churches that have publicly welcomed lesbians and gay men.

Since this grass roots movement of "welcoming" churches now spans many denominations, *Open Hands* has just become ecumenical. It is now being published in conjunction with More Light (Presbyterian), Open and Affirming (United Church of Christ), and Reconciled in Christ (Lutheran) churches.

This ecumenical movement, 375 congregations strong and still growing, demonstrates that churches can rise above discord and division and affirm that the grace of God is, indeed, available to all persons.

If you believe that our churches can and must move forward to address the concerns of lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, won't you try *Open Hands*?

You can receive the next four issues of *Open Hands* for only \$16 (\$20 outside the U.S.A.). Simply check off the enclosed return form and enclose your check. Or charge your subscription to your credit card.



With the help of *Open Hands* your church can begin to make a difference. Your church can be the leaven that helps the larger church move toward greater faithfulness in ministry with lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons.

Peace,

Mark Bowman

Mark Bowman, Coordinator
Reconciling Congregation Program

P.S. In order to better cover our growing ecumenical movement of "welcoming" churches, we've also increased the size of *Open Hands* from 24 to 32 pages. So now you will receive more *Open Hands* at the same \$16 subscription price!